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ABSTRACT

Internships have traditionally been an important component in counselor training. At Bronx Community College (BCC), a model counselor training program has been developed which emphasizes student input as well as field experience. The underlying assumption of the model is that both the student interns and the host college can teach one another skills and competencies needed to attain the common educational goal of student self-direction and personal competence. Once procedures are established for ensuring that students are trained and supervised in appropriate counseling techniques and methods, students complete a three-part contract which parallels the three components of the model. Part I of the contract focuses on the intern's responsibility to develop his/her own program and to study and suggest innovative changes in the areas chosen for concentration. The student specifies one or two areas in which he/she would like to develop competencies, rates the desired goal, and selects criteria for self-evaluating progress. The student also suggests new initiatives for the curriculum and student services. Part II of the contract establishes the intern's role as a consultant to the college where he/she is interning, and reflects his/her ability to define and discuss the mission and role of student development. Each intern is required to file a report of areas and initiatives that he/she feels are crucial to the host college's student development needs. Part III of the contract allows for student input to formulate and change policy as related to the collaboration between colleges of study and practicum field sites. This part of the contract provides the input needed to improve the cooperative structure between assigning colleges and accepting field sites. (JMC)

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Internship Model That Provides A Growing Edge

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Summary

This contract-based model of internship training at Bronx Community College sees the student as a resource who can provide the "growing edge" to the college's student services.

The intern is not a passive recipient of educational training but an active contributor in three areas: (1) the intern develops her or his own professional goal; (2) the intern acts as a "consultant" to the college; and, (3) the intern suggests new directions in college and field's site collaborative projects.

In the first part of the contract, the intern (1) specifies one or two areas in which she or he would like to develop competency; and, (2) rates on a scale the desired goal he or she will attain; and, (3) select criteria by which he or she can judge own progress.

Part II of the contract requires the student to file a report of new areas and new initiatives that he or she sees are crucial for improving student development services.

Part III of the contact encourages the intern to suggest policy changes as these relate to improving the collaboration between college of study and practicum fieldsites.

The use of interns as "consultants" gave Bronx Community College an opportunity to address its growth needs. The interns developed innovative ideas around problem identification and goals; they were able to convert plans into action and through the three-part contract establish a central and active role while training in college.

INTERNSHIP MODEL THAT PROVIDES A GROWING EDGE

By

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Internships traditionally have been an important educational component in training future counselors. Through field placement, the student is able to gain valuable experience that will put him in a better position to compete more effectively for employment opportunities upon graduation. Such "preparation" models also help reduce the cultural shock that students experience between the classroom and employment. The student also is able to see better the theory of the classroom and its direct applicability to the world of practice.

Need for New Models

The current climate has created a favorable environment for field experience and new models are needed to capitalize on this opportunity to improve the quality of programs offered (Berte and O'Neil, 1987; Maguire, 1987).

One of the most overlooked resources in traditional preparation programs is the student as a resource him/herself. The view of students in traditional models has been that of the intern as a passive recipient of the educational experience. The potential contribution of student input into the process is little explored (Munson et al., 1986). The primary purpose of this article is to describe a model that incorporates student input as a growing edge to colleges of student and fields of placement in counseling and student development work.

The three-part contract that an intern enters into at Bronx Community College (BCC) constitutes the three components of the model being described for a program of internship training (Stull, 1987).

Part I of Contract: Intern's Self-Development Goals

The first component to this model is training students in the appropriate counseling techniques and methods. An essential part of training is close faculty supervision to ensure program standardization and quality. Structure and procedures are a critical element in this phase to ensure success (Hart, 1982).

Once these procedures are established, student input is used to constitute the first part of the contract. The first part of the contract focuses on intern's (1) responsibility to develop his or her own program; and (2) to study and suggest innovative changes in the areas he/she had chosen for growth and development.

The student chooses areas of concentration that may be tied directly with the intern structure of student course assignment and may even be associated with course credit. The student has a substantial role in developing and shaping her/his own program. In the first part of the contract, the intern (1) specifies one or two areas in which she or he would like to develop competency; (2) rates on a scale the desired goal she or he wishes to attain; and (3) selects concrete criteria by which she or he could judge own progress.

Additionally, the interns will suggest new initiatives in the areas chosen for growth and development. Some of the examples of the ways that interns have provided the growing edge in the areas chosen for growth and development were: how the curriculum committee could offer courses directly related to the workplace; how to help students be better prepared for employment process by updating job counseling procedures; how to establish an employment center for the aggressive use of student abilities to contact potential employers.

Second Part of the Contract: Intern as Consultant to College of Placement

Part II of the contract becomes an assignment and a reflection of the interns'ability to define and discuss the mission and role of student development (Goldfried and Robbins, 1982).

Part II of this contract will help students see the relevance and contribution that they make to overall program development. Each intern is required to file a report of new areas and new initiatives that he or she feels are crucial for student development needs. The finished report takes the form of a memo addressed to the administrative staff of the several units involved.

Most interns pointed to the following new service areas as crucial to student needs: Learning How to Learn seminars, Developing a Mentorship program, Learning Communities, and High School-College collaboration program.

This type of program cannot be publicized on the basis of renumeration but as one that is based upon the creative service students render through their input to study their job and see how these services respond to student needs. Recognition by feedback from student development administrators is critical to such a model and must be directly related to input made and to the type of contribution made by the interns. Seeing her or his impact is essential not only for positive attitude development but also necessary for the recruitment of new interns.

Third Part of the Contract: New Directions in College and Field Site Collaboration

The third part of the contract is the input needed to improve the cooperative structure between assigning colleges and accepting fieldsites. Part III of the contract is set to allow student input to formulate and change policy of the programs as these related to the collaboration between college of study and practicum fieldsites (Firestone, 1981).

Collaboration in this case sets the role of each and the relationships that exist between the instructional element and the practicum agency. Some of the inputs given by interns in this direction included, for example: professional workshops for field supervisors provided by teaching faculty; socials for college and agency supervisors; meetings during the term to discuss experiences provided by faculty instructors and agency/field supervisors; establishment of a clearinghouse to aid interns in the selection of compatible fieldsites. The primary focus of these structural dialogues is the improvement of the quality of the experience and of the program.

Student input is important to improvement and expansion of the internship model (Bandura, 1982). The working model described here is not meant to be definitive but only suggestive to stimulate additional ideas for the development of student input models and for improving training because the students are the center and product of the process. The underlying assumption is that each group can teach the other skills and competencies needed to attain the common educational goal of student self-direction and personal competence.

The effective use of interns who provide growing edges creates a stronger bond between students and the host college. The use of interns as "consultants" gave BCC an opportunity to address its growth needs. Interns provided new perspectives to professionals who may have developed myopic vision when it comes to examining their own programs. Also as a result of this model, interns reinforced their professional identities. The interns learned to examine issues of initial contact and entry into a system, formulate a contract and establish a working relationship, develop innovative ideas around problem identification, diagnosis, goals; they are able to convert plans into action and through the three-part contract establish a central role in this active model of internship training.

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